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Association for Behavior Analysis  
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February 23, 2011

To Whom This May Concern:

This letter is in regards to RB 974, which considers the addition of "developmental/relationship-based therapy" to the list of treatments for autism spectrum disorders (ASD) paid for by insurance companies. "Developmental/relationship-based therapy" is most commonly referred to under its proprietary name, "Relationship Development Intervention" (RDI), which is marketed by a for-profit company, RDIconnect based in Houston, TX.

At this time, there is no research to support the claim that RDI is an effective treatment for children with ASD. Although RDIconnect states on their website <http://www.rdiconnect.com/>, that "the RDI Program for ASD is based on over 15 years of specialization with the Autism Spectrum Disorders," a thorough search of the literature on RDI and autism found only three articles. The primary author of all three articles was Steven E. Gutstein, PhD, the founder of RDIconnect. In Gutstein's most recent article from 2009, he writes, "*Although a controlled, blinded study of RDI has yet to be done, preliminary research suggests that parents, through the RDI curriculum and consultation process, have the potential to exert a powerful impact on their ASD children's experience-sharing communication, social interaction, and adaptive functioning.*" In addition, the RDI certification program is not accredited by the National Council for Certifying Agencies, <http://www.credentialingexcellence.org/>, or by any other independent accreditation body.

It is crucial that only therapies based in science and research be an option through insurance. Until RDI can be proven as an evidence-based practice through independent research, insurance companies should not be responsible for paying for "developmental/relationship-based therapy."

Sincerely,

Elizabeth C. Nulty, MS, BCBA  
 Board Member, CTABA

References:

- Gutstein, S. E. (2009). Empowering families through Relationship Development Intervention: an important part of the biopsychosocial management of autism spectrum disorders. *Annals of Clinical Psychiatry*, 21(3), 174-182.